

Final TV Speech
Nov. 1, 1954

My Fellow Democrats of South Carolina:

In this campaign for the United States Senate there is but one issue -- shall 31 men be allowed to name a Senator for 6 years or shall the 600,000 registered voters be given the opportunity to name a Senator in a Democratic primary election?

I will not discuss tonight the flimsy arguments offered that a primary could not be held. You will remember that the State Chairman, Mr. Bennett, and the representative of the National Committee, Mr. Brown, stated that the day before the Committee acted, they sought the advice of ~~two~~ two distinguished lawyers who were members of the State Committee, the Honorable Robert M. Figg of Charleston and the Honorable Thomas H. Pope of Newberry. However, the Committee candidate has never told you what is the fact -- that both Mr. Figg and Mr. Pope advised him a primary could be held and both these distinguished lawyers voted for a primary.

When 31 men voted to deny the people a primary, the people rebelled. They were not satisfied with the statement of the man named by the Committee that if a voter did not wish to vote for him, the voter could write in the name of another person. The people are accustomed to voting in a primary where the ballot is simple and where a candidate has to receive a majority of the votes instead of a mere plurality.

I realized it was a handicap to oppose the committee candidate who had his name printed on the ballot and the people would have to write in my name. But in response to the requests of thousands of people I agreed to let my name be used as a candidate and to work with those who disapproved of the tactics of the State Committee.

The Committee candidate refused to withdraw so that a primary could be held in the 60 days between September 3 and November 2.

Then to make the issue crystal clear, I promised the people that should I be elected, I would resign in 1956 in time to let the people elect a Senator in the primary that must be held in June, 1956. That is only 19 months away. Then there could be held the primary election which the Committee denied the people this fall.

The Committee candidate not only refused to resign and permit a primary this fall, but he also refused to resign in 1956 so as to let the people then elect a Senator.

The fact is, of course, that the nominee of the 31 men did not intend to permit the people to vote. Even before the State Committee met on September 3, he said that if a primary were held, it would be a "Rump Primary" controlled by "off-brand Democrats."

His statement was an indictment of the Democratic voters of this State whom he did not trust to choose the best candidate.

In view of this history, it is difficult to understand how a person can say he favors electing a Senator in a primary election, and then vote for the Committee candidate who has denied this right to the people.

Of course, if you vote for me as a means of insuring a primary election for Senator in 19 months, you are entitled to know now what I stand for.

I am a Democrat -- a South Carolina Democrat. When I am elected to the Senate, I will vote with the Democrats to organize the Senate. I will advocate and give 100 per cent support to the platform of the Democratic Party of South Carolina. On issues not referred to in that platform, I shall vote for what I believe is for the best interests of the people of South Carolina.

My record in public life shows that I have been successful in the enactment of progressive legislation. As Governor, I always worked for the best interests of the State.

This year my fellow service-men in the Reserve Officers Association elected me National President of that organization. As President of the Reserve Association, I have discussed our national defense problems with the President of the United States. I have consulted with General Ridgeway, Chief of Staff of the Army, General Twining, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Admiral Carney, Chief of Naval Operations, and many other officials of the defense establishment. I have appeared before the Armed Forces Committee to advocate the strengthening of our military defenses to keep America strong.

Attack upon this nation will come only when the Russians believe they are stronger than we are.

All of us are heartened by the agreement reached by the Western democracies for the defense of Europe. In every home in America there are prayers for peace because every home knows the sacrifices of war.

We know that only when we unite the strength of free peoples can we successfully negotiate with the Soviets. REDACTED

I shall support the United Nations fully in its efforts to maintain world peace.

We must help those nations which help themselves and are willing to help us in return. We must stop spending recklessly when a nation shows it has greater regard for an American dollar than for Democracy.

I shall vote for strong defense measures to keep our country safe and for appropriations sufficient to carry out those measures.

My record as a State Senator and as Governor shows that I have been a friend of the working man. I was author of the Bill which increased workmen's compensation benefits, and was a member of the Committee that wrote the Social Security Law.

In the Senate I shall work for more adequate provisions to care for our needy aged citizens, dependent children, the blind and handicapped persons. Social security coverage should be extended to many persons not covered and benefits should be increased to keep pace with the increased cost of living. It is essential that our people remain employed, and nothing should be left undone to provide them full employment.

As Governor, I advocated further increases in workmen's compensation benefits and a law on occupational diseases. I sponsored a system of area trade schools in South Carolina to train skilled workers and enable them to receive higher wages.

I helped bring diversified industries into South Carolina. We were able to provide 60,000 new jobs in the State and to provide industry with many advantages which could not be found in neighboring States.

During my administration as Governor, I followed a business-like system, refusing to sign appropriation bills unless sufficient revenue was available to maintain a balanced budget. If a balanced budget is good for a State, it would be good for the Federal government.

My efforts on behalf of better schools and increased teachers' salaries are well known.

One of the problems to which I would give immediate attention in the U. S. Senate is that of farm parity. I shall vote for a firm 90 per cent parity for basic farm commodities. I will work to see that South Carolina is not discriminated against in acreage allotments. Either low prices or the loss of one crop sets a farmer back for several years. We must have a strong agricultural economy to maintain a sound national economy.

I would seek to simplify the handling of applications for drought relief, cut out red tape and speed their approval.

The disaster program under Public Law 875 should be extended to cover hog and poultry producers.

Such natural disasters as the freezing of peach crops should be included for protection under the Law which covers losses of other crops by drought.

Measures must be undertaken to promote soil conservation and to improve land and water use and management.

Congress should enact laws to encourage increased exports of farm commodities.

I favor the extension of rural electrification. Electrical and telephone service should be available to every farm home.

I am opposed to socialized medicine.

From my experience as a combat soldier in World War II and as an active reservist, I know the many problems of the service-man and veteran. I shall give full support to legislation assuring our veterans of adequate hospitalization benefits.

No man who offered his life for his country should be forgotten when he is no longer able to take care of himself and his family.

I am informed that about two hours ago Mr. Brown stated that Governor Elect George Bell Timmerman, Jr., was supporting him. I know that is not true. Mr. Timmerman is not supporting him and he is not supporting me. It is unfair to Mr. Timmerman to misrepresent him. If Mr. Timmerman were supporting either of us, he would have the courage to say so. This is just another effort of Mr. Brown, at the eleventh hour, to deceive the people. Every true friend of Mr. Timmerman should resent the way he has been misrepresented.

Vicious anonymous letters and handbills have been circulated against me and my supporters. There will be more of them and more vicious than ever at this eleventh hour of the campaign. A resort to such tactics is clear evidence that our opponents are desperate.

I know that some businessmen have been threatened. Some other people have been intimidated. They have been told that if they do not vote for the Committee candidate, there will be retaliation in the next session of the Legislature. Our people do not frighten easily.

I shall always remember the men and women who had the courage in this campaign to defend the attack upon one of their sacred rights -- the right to vote in a primary election.

There are many sincere South Carolinians who will vote to elect me, not as Strom Thurmond, an individual, but to uphold a principle. I realize that I have made mistakes in the past. I know I shall not be perfect on this earth, but I pledge to you that I shall always be a man of principle. I shall strive to perform the duties of Senator in such a way as to reflect credit on our beloved State and justify your confidence in me.

Other peoples in other lands know the result of losing the right of free elections. Among our good neighbors in South America, we have seen the frightful results of the loss of free elections.

I am glad tonight that Americans are freedom-loving people. They are willing to fight to preserve that freedom, hard-won on the fields of battle. In every crisis in our history, they have proved their courage.

But every fight is not on the battlefield. This fight is at the ballot box. It is a fight to preserve for the people the right to elect a Senator.

Tomorrow when you enter the election booth, only your conscience will determine how you vote. I hope that when you leave the booth you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have voted for the best interests of your country and the best interests of your children.